

VZCZCXRO7495  
RR RUEHROV  
DE RUEHDJ #1011 3511343  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 161343Z DEC 08  
FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9819  
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 001011

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/15/2019

TAGS: [DJ](#) [ER](#) [MOPS](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: ERITREAN OFFICER DEFECTS ACROSS DJIBOUTI BORDER

REF: DJIBOUTI 1000

Classified By: Amb. J. Swan for reasons 1.4(b)(d).

¶1. (C) Embassy Djibouti received reports of an incident on the Djibouti/Eritrea Border on December 15, 2008. At approximately 0930, an Eritrean officer (specific rank unknown) accompanied by several troops, defected to the Djibouti side in the area of Dadda'to, approximately 60 kilometers southwest of Ras Doumeira. In fact-to-face communication with Djiboutian troops, local Eritrean forces threatened to "take action" if he were not returned. Djiboutian government officials reported that the situation appeared tense but stable and that they did not intend to return the Eritrean officer, who was in the custody of the Djiboutian Armed Forces.

¶2. (C) Colonel Abdurahman Cher, the on-site Djiboutian military commander, reached at his headquarters in Moulhoule at 1900 hours on December 15, indicated that the situation was stable and calm, but military forces in the northern sector remained on high alert. Armed Forces leadership met December 15 for a highly unusual evening meeting, reflecting their concern over the incident.

¶3. (C) Comment: The Djiboutians were initially spun up over this incident, perhaps because it is reminiscent of the events of June 10, 2008, when Djiboutian refusal to return Eritrean defectors led to a thirty-six-hour-long border skirmish that resulted in an estimated 70 Djiboutian deaths and an unknown number of Eritrean casualties. While we continue to seek further details, by late afternoon December 16 Djiboutian security contacts appeared less concerned that this incident would lead to new conflict. There has been no cross-border violence since June (reftel).

SWAN